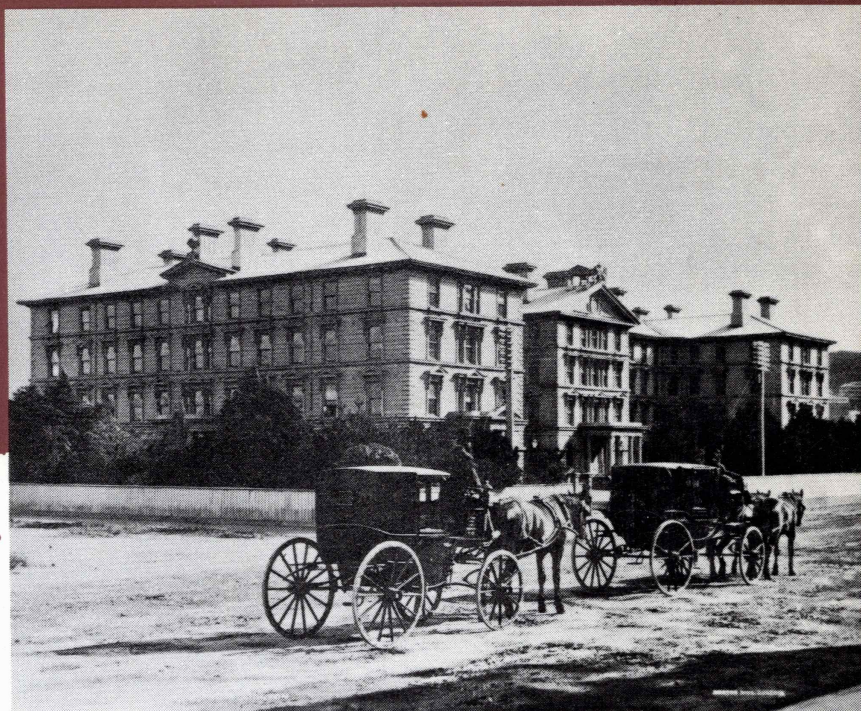


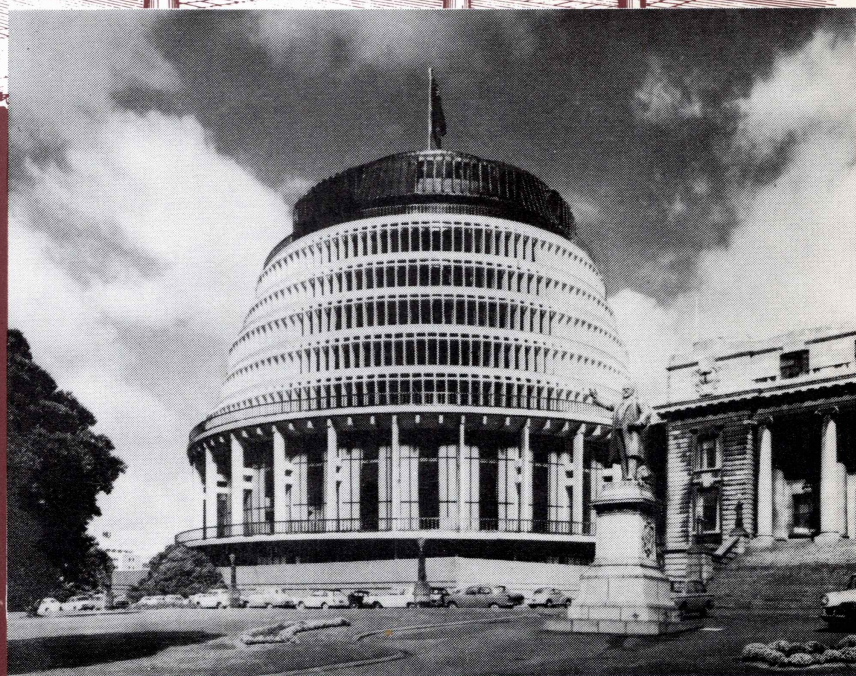
A brief history of



**Public Buildings
in New Zealand**



Ministry of Works



Sullen A/C

Photographs

DUNEDIN
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Front cover:

Government Buildings (1880).
Photo—Turnbull Library.

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"Beehive" Additions to Parliament Buildings.

Front cover background:

Arts Library University of Canterbury.

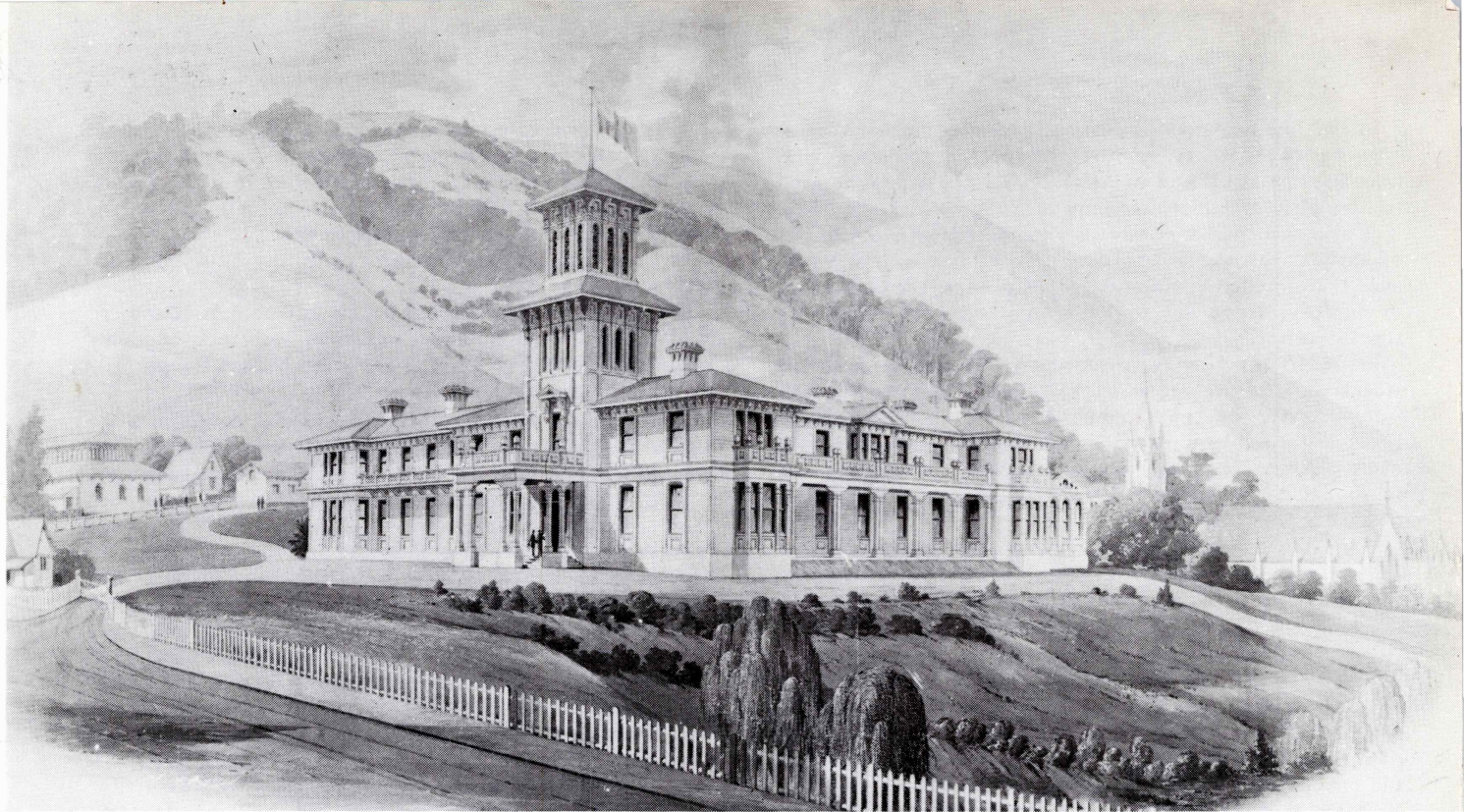
Opposite:

Government House (1869) later part of Parliament Buildings,
demolished 1969.

Original water colour by G. O'Brien in Turnbull Library.

Back cover:

Scheme for Parliament Buildings (1912).
Photo—Turnbull Library.



Public Buildings in New Zealand

This brief history of public buildings in New Zealand has been prepared to mark the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Architectural Division within the Ministry of Works. It has made no little contribution to the architecture of New Zealand over this period.

Early Colonial Architects

The first Superintendent of Works in New Zealand was appointed in 1839.

When Captain Hobson was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand under the jurisdiction of New South Wales, he had the immediate task of setting up technical staff. As his Superintendent of Works he engaged in Sydney, just before he left for the Bay of Islands, a 29-year-old assistant in the Colonial Architect's Office, William Mason.

Thus the first official Superintendent of Works was the young William Mason—the first architect to set foot in New Zealand.

He had first to put Clendon's buildings at Okiato into suitable shape for their new role of temporary "capital" and then, after Hobson's choice of the site of Auckland, to start assembling materials for the store and houses to be prefabricated and erected on the shores of the Waitemata . . . Mason supervised the building of the prefabricated, single-storeyed Government House and designed a post office and a courthouse. Neither of these last two was particularly distinguished, if only because they were done on a shoestring.

In 1841, he resigned his post as Superintendent of Works.

Frederick Thatcher, another competent architect, who later became associated with Bishop Selwyn, was appointed to the post of Superintendent of Public Works in 1845. It is also recorded that he was shouldered with the duties of harbourmaster and boarding officer for customs, whatever that entailed in those days. His service, too, was short in duration as he left to undertake secretarial work for the Governor.

In 1854, after many vicissitudes, Mason returned to Auckland, at the request of Colonel Wynyard, the Administrator of the Colony, to take up the post of Provincial Architect, primarily to build the new Government House . . . This house, now regarded with great sentiment by Aucklanders, received less praise when first finished.

With Government House under way, Mason became president of the Board of Works, whose concerns were as much with roads and bridges as with architecture.

When the provincial governments were established "works" officers were appointed, some being professional engineers, other architects and surveyors. Most of these men were well trained, were leaders in their respective professions, and able to contribute in no small measure to the early development of the colony. B. W. Mountfort and his partner Isaac Luckmore, provincial architects in Canterbury, were responsible for the impressive Provincial Council Chambers in Christchurch.

So it came about that, until the abolition of the provinces in 1875, "public works" were local responsibilities with little national support or guidance. Local public buildings could well be financed and constructed on this provincial basis. The early flow of immigrants and the establishment of settlements backed by rural development was, from 1860 onwards, seriously jeopardised in the North by the Maori wars and in the South by the fluctuating fortunes of successive gold rushes.

These unhappy vicissitudes, more than anything else, led to stagnation throughout the colony and only a strong central authority could give new life and direction to the country as a whole.

So, despite much opposition from the provincial governments, central government administration became a necessity. This in turn sparked off a public building programme.

To undertake the first major project, a new home in Wellington for the Governor-General, W. H. Clayton was appointed Colonial Architect. He was responsible direct to the Colonial Secretary.

His first responsibility then, was the design and supervision of the Government House contract. In the *Cyclopaedia of New Zealand* it is recorded that "Government House is a two-storey edifice in the Italian style . . . The top of the Tower is 80 feet above ground level and the magnificent view at this elevation is a surprise and delight . . . Construction was delayed due to the arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh in August 1870, necessitating the construction of a temporary structure as a ballroom—(thereafter contemptuously referred to as a 'Shedifice' in *Hansard*). The building was completed in 1871, arranged with all the conveniences modern ideas of comfort suggest. Ventilation has had due attention paid to it throughout and gas and electricity are both laid on. Truly a vice-regal residence!"

A new policy of bold expenditure on public works generally and the availability of new capital brought more demands for public buildings, some small in size, but many of magnificent proportions compared with earlier ones. A small notice in the *New Zealand Times* 20 February 1872 could be considered significant! "To parents and guardians. The Colonial Architect has a vacancy for an articled pupil." Who was appointed cannot now be discovered but whoever he was he had considerable prospects before him.

Clayton was commissioned to produce, without delay dozens of post and telegraph offices, police stations, and hospitals. This work load particularly the supervision could only be accomplished by calling on the strength of the newly created Public Works Department.

He was transferred to it still with the title "Colonial Architect," in 1873.

On the transfer of Government from Auckland to Wellington many hundreds of civil servants suddenly descended on the new capital and were housed temporarily in makeshift accommodation all round Thorndon.

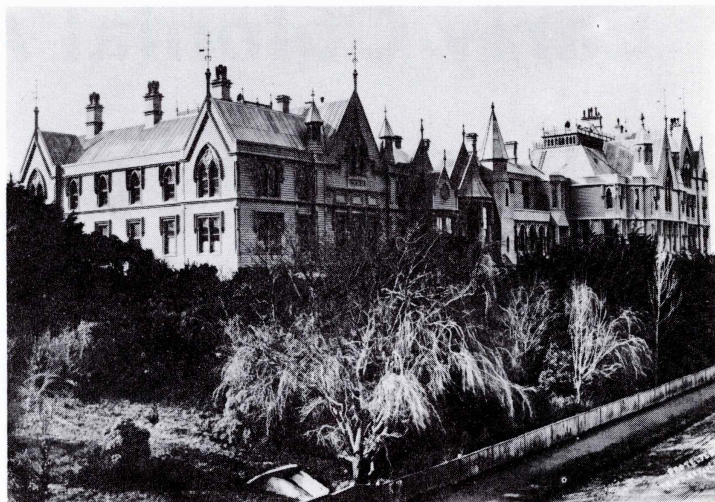
The Colonial Architect was therefore directed to bring forward a design for general government offices of such huge dimensions that no suitable site was readily available. This problem was solved by reclamation—along the waterfront of Lambton Quay.

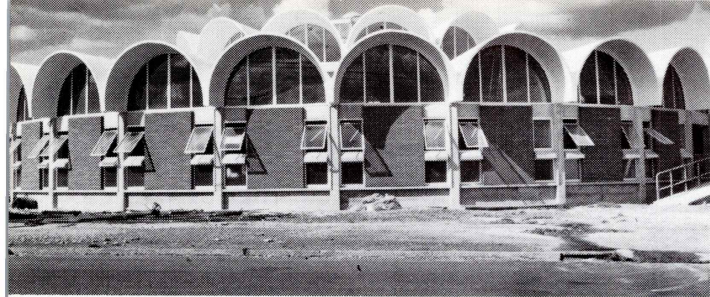
Alternative tenders were invited in November 1873 for the erection of these new departmental offices of the General Government, in concrete or timber. The tenders received on the basis of concrete construction were considered to be too high, and the time for construction too long, so that subsequently construction in timber was authorised. One of the tenders received included this tag "This tender don't take the risk against Earth shakes nor foundations giving—nor with regard to time," but it was cost and time that determined the type of construction. That much of the timber used was imported from Australia is surprising in view of the extensive stands of native timber not so many miles away.

Quoting from *Streets of My City*—"Undoubtedly one of the finest structures the Dominion has to offer is the Government Building, erected in 1876 to meet the needs of the rapidly growing civil service, a beautifully proportioned block somewhat resembling a wooden replica of Somerset House and standing in grounds which, though limited, serve to enhance not only the building they surround but the whole northern end of the Quay. The building is constructed entirely of wood and forms the largest permanent wooden structure in the world. And what wood! For the main block the framework of Tasmanian hardwood, the weatherboards and interior of Kauri . . . The central block was erected for £40,000, the wings were added in 1897 and 1907 for a total of £6,500. It stands on land reclaimed in 1874 now fifteen chains away from the nearest waterfront. And it endures. Spare it a moment as you pass, if only to feel the beauty of its ordered plan, of the kauri medallions and pediments, all hand carved in our midst."

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Parliament Buildings from Sydney Street West (1880).





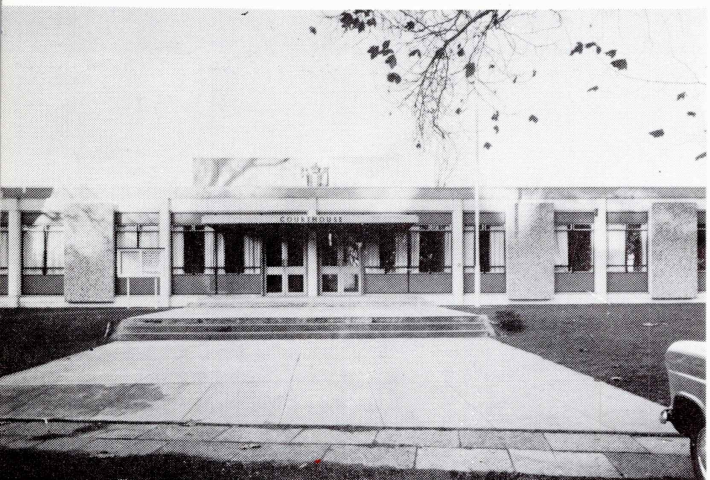
Putaruru Post Office.



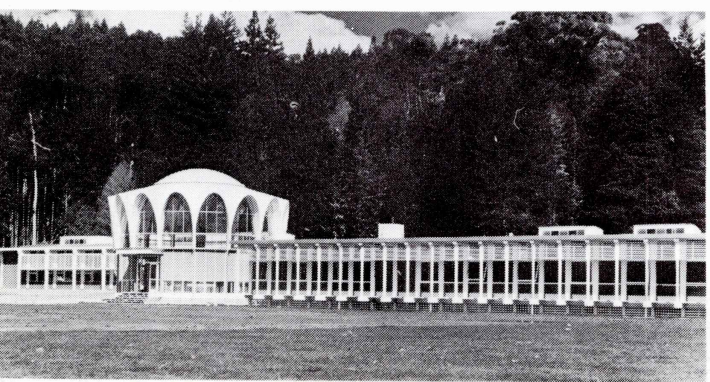
Hawera Post Office.



*Whangarei Post Office.
Photo—Derek Messenger.*



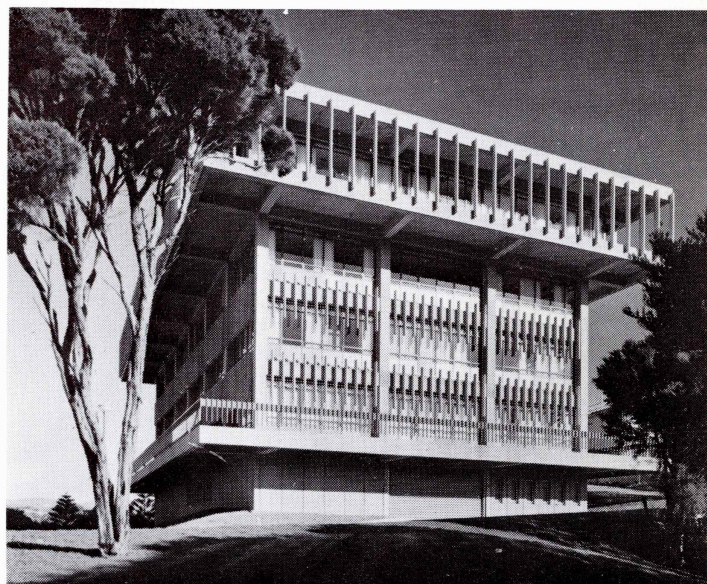
*Tauranga Courthouse.
Photo—Renwood Studio.*



Forest Research Institute, Rotorua.

A group of varied buildings constructed in provincial towns and cities.

*Meteorological Office, Kelburn.
Photo—Duncan Winder.*



*Government Printing Office.
Photo—Duncan Winder.*



*Auckland Police Headquarters.
Photo—Barry McKay.*



Three of the many large specialist buildings constructed in recent years in the main centres.



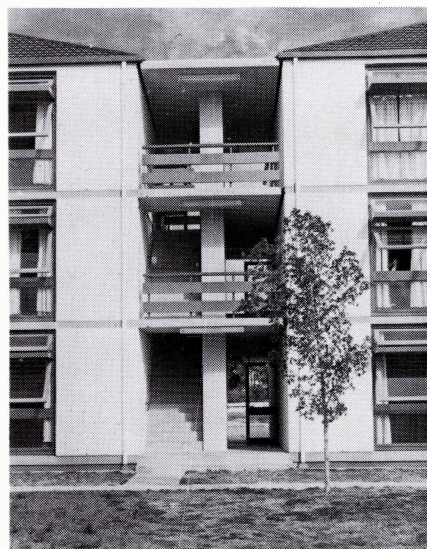
*University of Canterbury,
Science Buildings.*



University of Waikato, Halls of Residence.

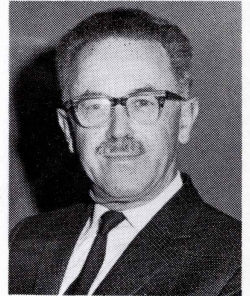
During 1960–1970 decade the following major projects have been undertaken:

1. Atkinson Building, New Plymouth.
2. Broadcasting Studios, Dunedin.
3. Courthouses at Gisborne, New Plymouth, and Wanganui.
4. Forestry Research Station, Rotorua.
5. Government Printing Office, Wellington.
6. Maximum Security Prison, Paremoremo.
7. Medium Security Prison, Wi Tako.
8. Mental Institutions at Cherry Farm and Mangere.
9. Menzies Building, Invercargill.
10. Meteorological Office, Wellington.
11. Police headquarters, Auckland, Lower Hutt, New Plymouth, Napier, and Gisborne.
12. Post offices at Whangarei and Hawera.
13. Science faculties at Auckland, Canterbury, Massey, and Waikato universities.



F. G. F. Sheppard, 1959—

In 1959 F. G. F. Sheppard was appointed Government Architect. Since that date the demand for more comprehensive architectural services have accelerated, not only from the traditional departments who are required to use the division's professional assistance, but from trading departments and independent authorities. The universities of Waikato and Massey have joined those of Auckland, Canterbury, and Otago in seeking assistance from the division. This broadening of the field of activity has brought exciting new assignments—a challenge that has been met by vigorous designs. So great has been the demand, with relatively few additional staff, that pressure has forced changes in both policy and procedure: no longer is it possible for the Government Architect to take a major role in the handling of each project. Delegation has passed the responsibility down the line. Fortunately there is a strong team of experienced officers to shoulder this work on behalf of the Government Architect for in no other way could the division handle 900 jobs of a total value of \$145 million.

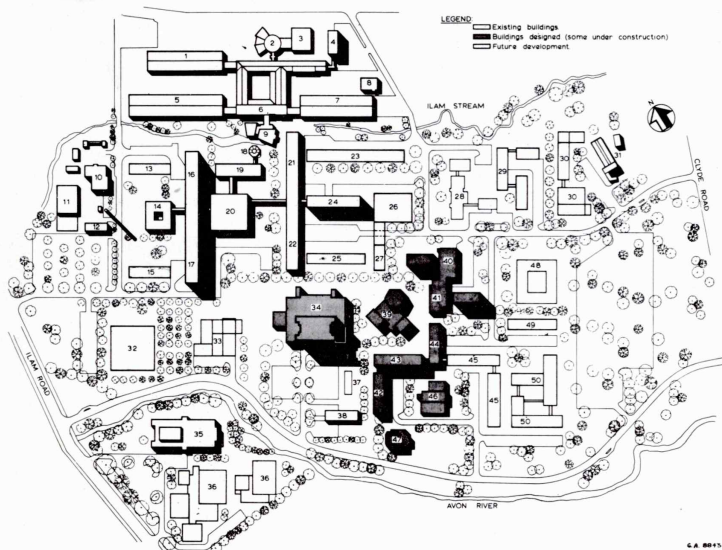


Menzies Building, Invercargill.

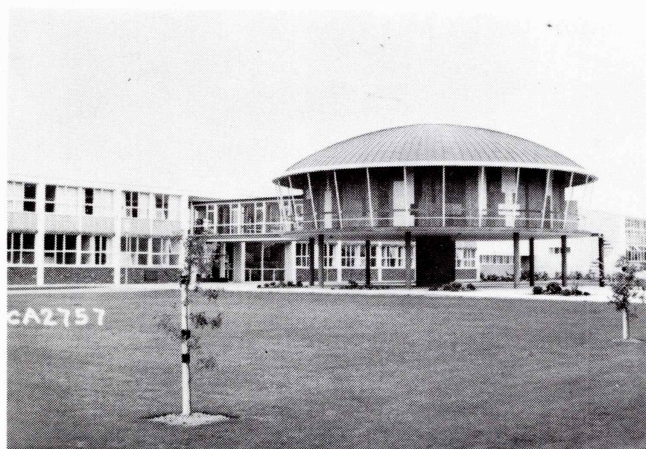


Vogel Building, Wellington.





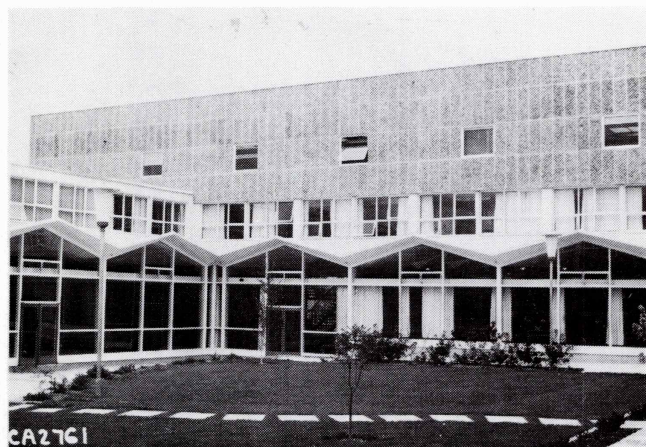
Development plan for the University of Canterbury at Ilam. The Ministry of Works has been associated with the project since 1949 when the decision was made to move the university from its cramped city quarters.



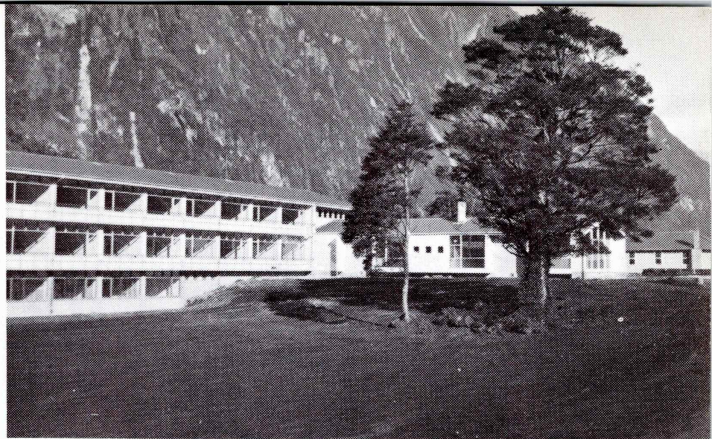
School of Engineering. Construction commenced in 1957 to provide for a roll of 300 students. It has been subsequently extended to accommodate 700.

Upper: The original lecture theatre.

Lower: The inner court.



Milford Sound Hotel.



Greys Avenue Flats, Auckland.



Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington.

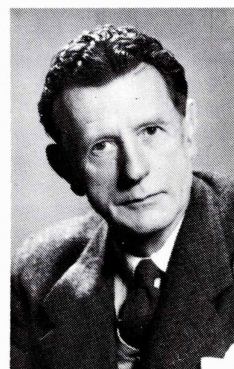




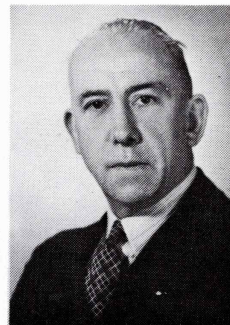
*Bledisloe State Building, Auckland.
Photo—Sparrow Photographers.*

F. Gordon Wilson, 1952–1959

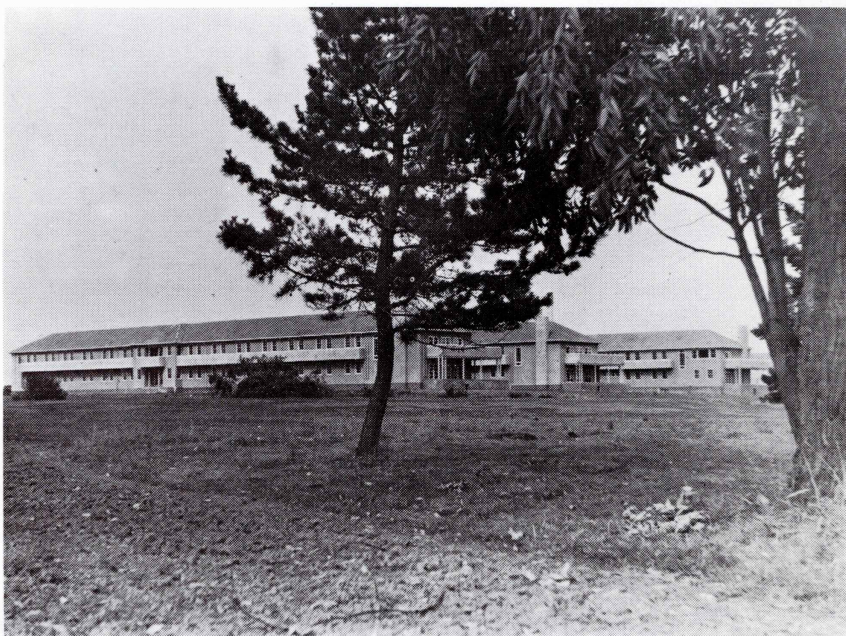
To his predecessor's sound organisation, Gordon Wilson brought his brilliant design skill. He had already made his mark in private practice with many major projects to his credit. He had had also, a highly successful record of achievement as Chief Architect for the Housing Construction Department. He had designed the Dixon Street Flats (1947) that had gained him a Gold Medal Award. He was tireless in design, leaving no detail unstudied, and he had the capacity to enthuse all his staff with the same degree of intense involvement. Architectural design was his whole life, and to many young architects he was the arbiter of "contemporary design." During his short term as leader of the Architectural Division—from 1952 to 1959—he was responsible for the Bledisloe Building, Auckland; the Bowen State Building, Wellington; State Flats, Grey's Avenue, Auckland; the Gordon Wilson Flats, Wellington; the Dental School, Dunedin; the Milford Hotel; the Engineering School, Canterbury University; and very many more.



R. A. Patterson, 1941–1952



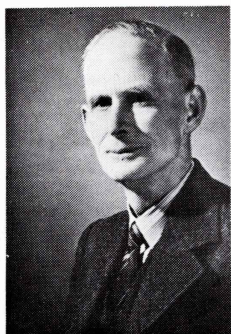
St. Helen's Hospital, Christchurch.



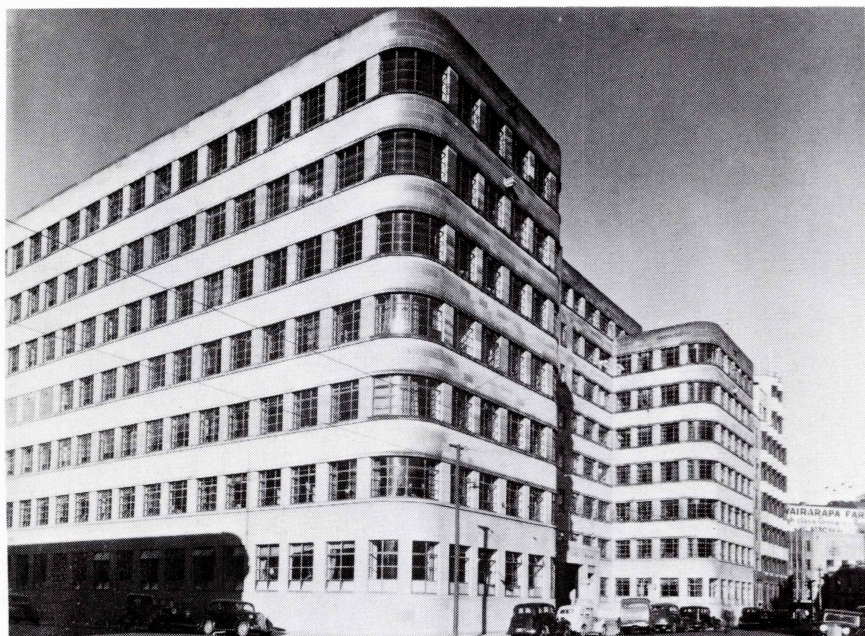
Nurses Home, Middlemore Hospital, Auckland.

Government Architect he brought as sound an administrative skill as anyone in the Department and was a strong and reliable support to his Minister. It fell to his lot during the war years to Marshall his team of architects and draughtsmen to the requirements of the armed services; there were camps, military hospitals, barracks, bases, stores, and offices, not only for the New Zealand forces but also for the United States Marines. Plans were prepared almost overnight for hundreds of buildings to be constructed throughout New Zealand or on remote Pacific Islands. Hardly architecture you may think but Bob Patterson brought to bear all his drive and skill to serve his Government. His Imperial Service award was fully merited. Having disposed of wartime activities he turned his attention in 1945 to recasting his

organisation into a separate division that could give a wide professional service to all Government departments. District offices were established, with a degree of decentralised authority, a pattern that still continues today and all procedures were codified with great care. In this way he built up morale and more particularly he built up a considerably higher level of service to his client departments. This new organisation then turned its attention to major projects with confidence. There followed in quick succession—the Dental Clinic, Willis Street, Wellington; St. Helen's Hospital, Christchurch; Post Office; Te Kuiti; and many more. In 1952 he handed over to his assistant and successor, Gordon Wilson.



John T. Mair, 1923–1941



*Government Departmental Buildings,
Stout Street, Wellington.*



Jean Batten Building, Auckland.

From 1923 to 1941 the architectural branch of the Public Works Department was under the direction of John T. Mair, a strong character of a man who brought to the Department a wide experience from private practice. His strong personality produced the leadership necessary to guide the staff through the trying period of the depression years and the difficult opening years of the second world war.

He was responsible for a large number of official buildings including the following: Courthouse Hamilton; Post Office, High Street, Christchurch; Government Life Office, Wellington; Departmental Building, Stout Street, Wellington; and the Jean Batten Building, Auckland.

His early training at the University of Pennsylvania and London led to an awareness and appreciation of a new type of architecture that set aside the old "styles" and based design more on "structure" and "function." The earliest tentative steps, in what has more recently been termed "modern," shows in some of his later works. So, too, construction gradually changed from traditional brick and timber to reinforced concrete and structural steel.

On retirement in 1941 he was succeeded by R. A. Patterson.

Here was another strong personality—in fact, he still is, in retirement in Wellington. He had joined the Department in 1908 as a cadet and by study and hard work made his career up every step of the ladder. To the position of

Supreme Court, Dunedin.



General Post Office, Auckland.



General Post Office, Wellington.



Government House, Wellington.
Photos—Alexander Turnbull Library.



John Campbell, 1890–1922



John Campbell, a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, was appointed the Chief Government Architect in 1890, a position he was to hold for the next 32 years. Although the demand for public buildings over this long period continued the amount of money available fluctuated wildly from year to year.

His first major building was the Law Courts, Dunedin (1901–02). This was followed by the Magistrate's Court, Lambton Quay, Wellington, then the boldy ornate Public Trust Office at the corner of Stout Street and Lambton Quay. Immediately following the disastrous fire that destroyed Parliament House in 1907 he was busily employed in converting and extending the old Mount View Asylum to serve as Government House, while Parliament met in the old Governor's Residence (later Bellamys). Although Government House externally, shows signs of haste, internally many of the rooms are nicely proportioned and carefully detailed. It still serves for many a dignified ceremony.

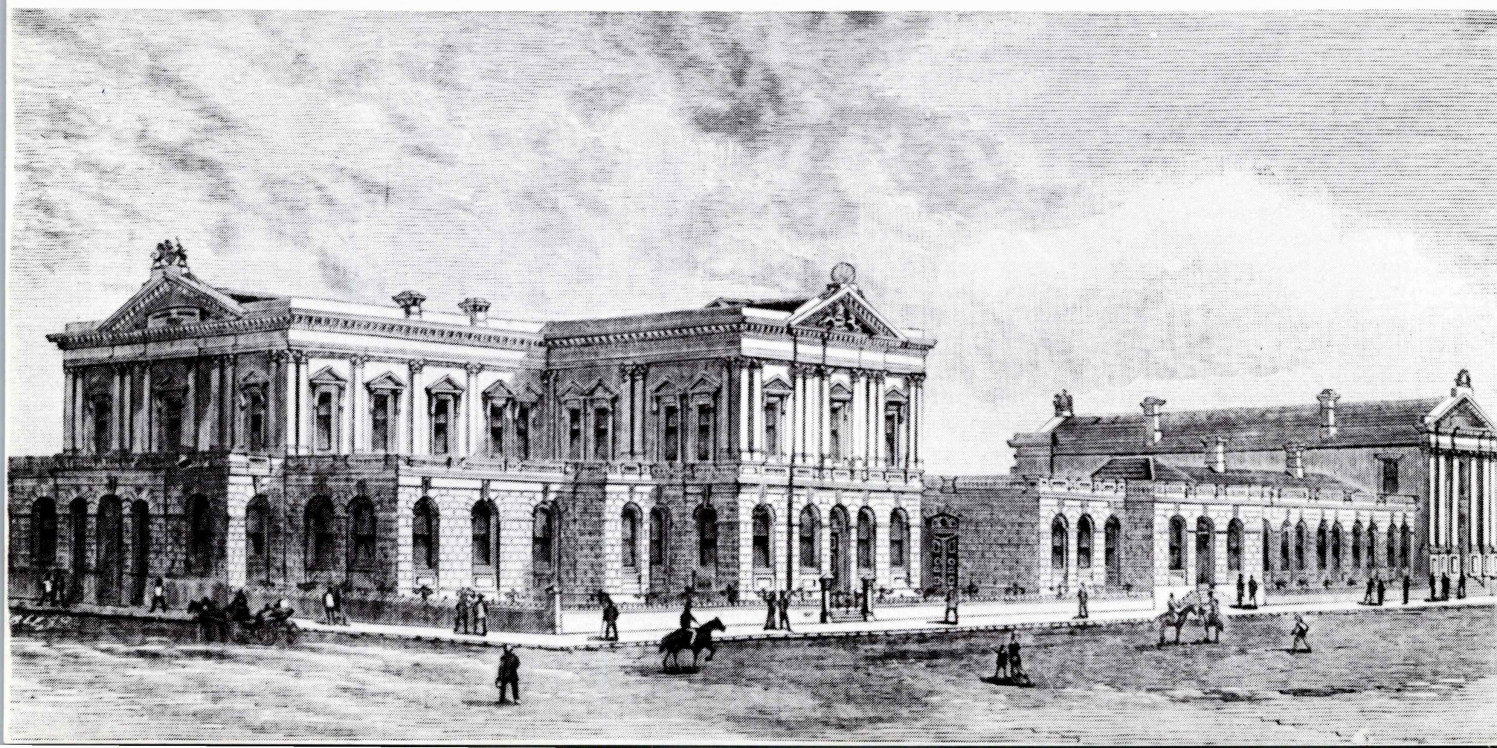
Although the central post offices in Auckland and Wellington well-known to all New Zealanders, may now be considered of ponderous architecture they were, when built, impressive examples of officialdom.

Then, in 1911, under somewhat unusual circumstances, Campbell competed with many other architects for the design of the new Parliament Buildings. He lodged one entry in association with Chas. A. Lawrence and another in association with Claude Paton—one of his departmental staff. The latter entry was deemed, in the judgement of an eminent panel of assessors, to be the most suitable. In due course construction was commenced, drawing supplies of marble from a remote quarry in Nelson, but the outbreak of war and the consequent draw off of labour and materials, meant very slow progress.

Parliament could not use the new accommodation until 1917—in an unfinished building. Many were the reasons for limiting the construction to little more than half of the original design, but war conditions are justification enough. So Campbell's *magnus opus* remained incomplete—for its whole life.

The old Hermitage, Mount Cook, was also one of Campbell's projects. He retired in 1922.

The New Law Courts Wellington (1881).
Photo—Alexander Turnbull Library.



Wellington has had, for nearly a hundred years this dignified and well proportioned landmark; a must for every tourist. Its age shows here and there in a wavy plinth line—just a little tired after many years of service.

But not all of the Colonial Architect's work was on this scale. The following notice appeared in the *New Zealand Times* 12 June 1874. "The Colonial Architect calls tenders; repairs to all Government Buildings, cleaning windows, attending to gas and hot-water apparatus at the Houses of Parliament; for a period of six months." and again in the *New Zealand Times* 28 August 1874 "The Colonial Architect calls tenders; firewood for General Government Departments, for six months."

Central Government, crammed into the old General Assembly Building sited between Sydney Street West and Hill Street soon found it necessary to expand their accommodation. So Clayton was called in, in 1873 to design a new House of Representatives and Upper Chamber clustered around the old building. This time he chose geo-gothic style and was again obliged to construct in timber. Some no doubt called this sham architecture, but so many of the buildings in Wellington were constructed of timber to avoid the hazards of earthquakes that there was little opposition; after all, it was cheap. But by avoiding the danger of damage by earthquake they were obliged to accept the danger of fire. It was completely destroyed in 1907.

Then from his drawing office flowed, between 1874 to 1877, a stream of plans for provincial post offices and courthouses. True, some were "standards" but others were of some magnitude, the courthouse at Wanganui for example and the, still standing, telegraph office on the corner of Rattray Street and High Street, Dunedin. Also well known is the old post office in Cathedral Square, Christchurch.



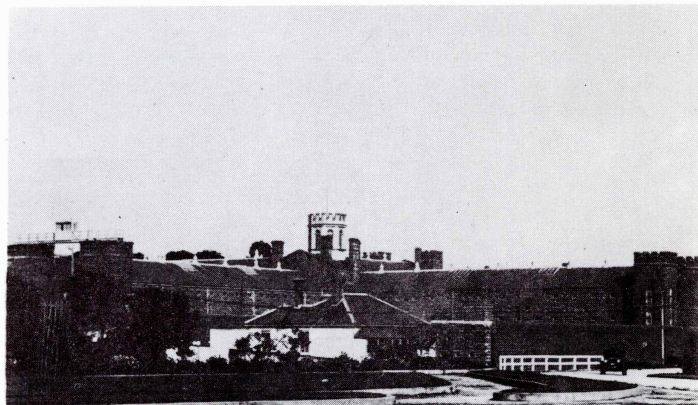
Pierre Burrows.

Clayton was followed by Pierre Burrows, who added many more post offices, courthouses, and police stations to the rapidly growing list of public buildings—and one for the army, a powder magazine at Point Jerminham. I wonder if it is still there? Two of his major works still stand in Wellington: the building on the corner of Lambton Quay and Whitmore Street, originally built as a police station, and the nearby Supreme Court. The latter dates from 1897–1901. It is recorded that the laying of the foundation stone was described in the local press as "the most imposing public ceremonial ever witnessed in New Zealand and certainly the largest Masonic gathering until then known in Wellington." Wellingtonians gathered in their thousands in and around the reclaimed land; even a special train from Featherston brought Wairarapa members of the fraternity to the city. After speeches, prayers, and a procession all declared it was a brilliant and successful occasion!

Two other buildings of considerable size, though hardly impressive architecture, was the Mount Cook Gaol, long since demolished, and the Mount Eden Gaol, unfortunately not demolished.



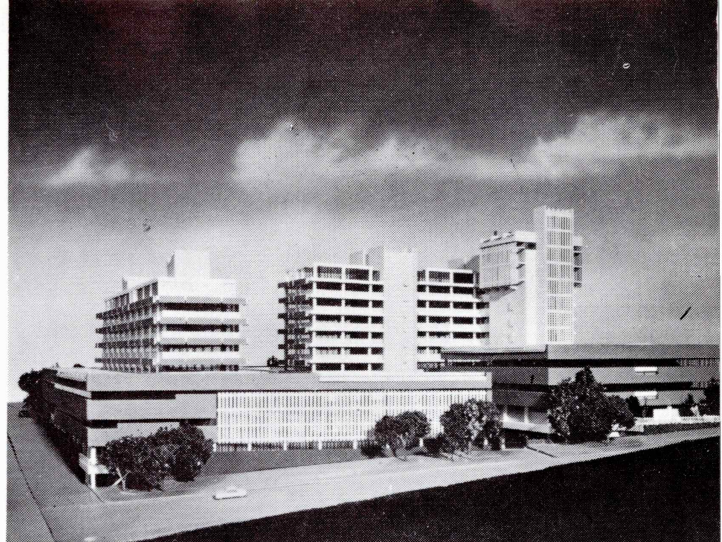
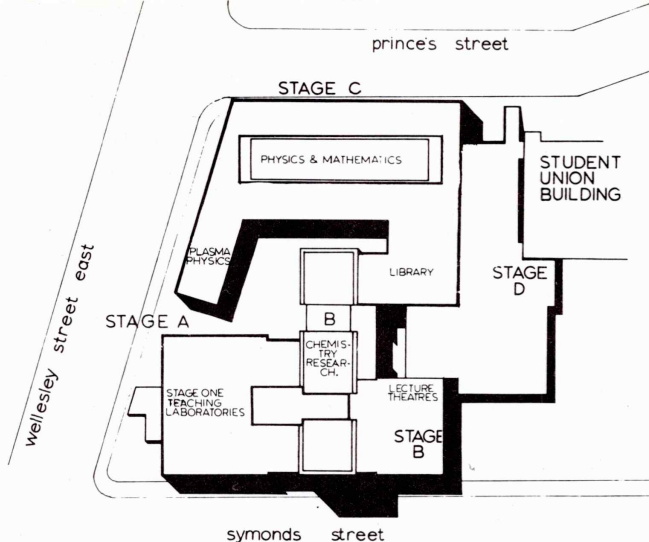
Wanganui Courthouse (1870).



Mount Eden Prison.

General Post Office, Christchurch.



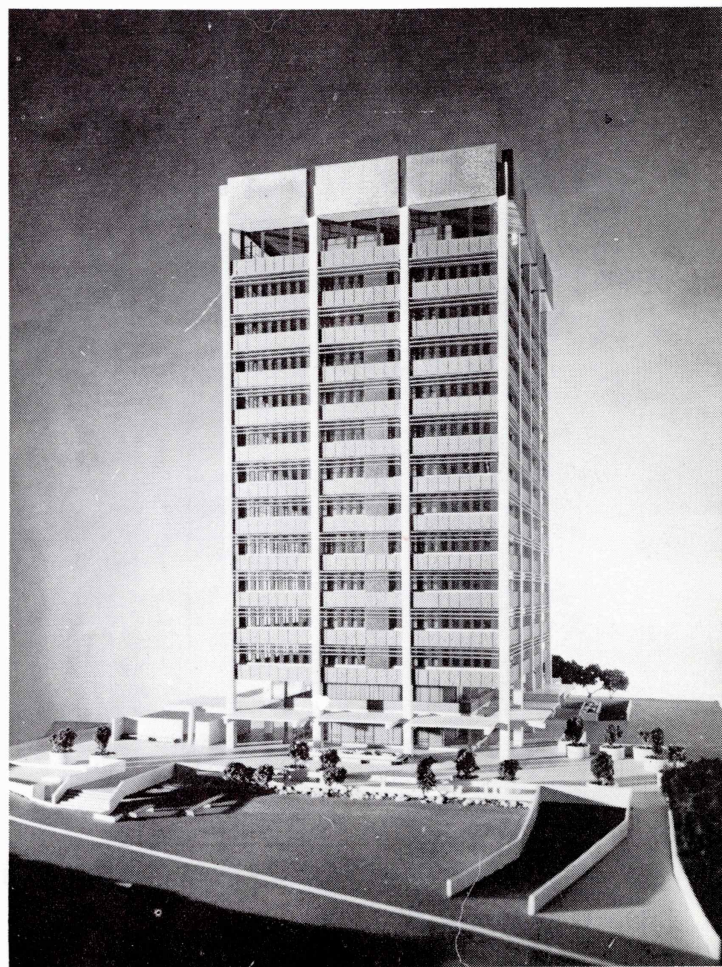
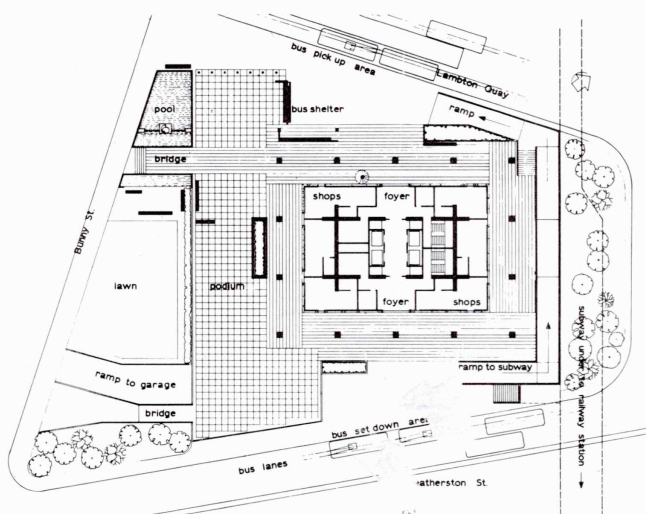


Major projects now under construction:

1. Additions to Parliament Buildings.
2. Central Telephone Exchange, Wellington.
3. Chemistry unit, University of Otago.
4. Government Office Accommodation, Newmarket.
5. Post Office Headquarters, Wellington.
6. Psychiatric Reception units, Kew, Waikare, and Palmerston North.
7. Rutherford House, Wellington.
8. Wellington Girl's College and many post-primary colleges throughout the country.

Science buildings, Auckland University. This major complex was commenced in 1963 and is due for completion in 1971.

Rutherford House, Wellington. This is one of many buildings under construction, or being planned for the Government Centre. It will house the Head Office of New Zealand Electricity Department.



Photos—Duncan Winder.

Photos—Duncan Winder.



Wellington Girls College, a multi-storey solution to the problem of a restricted site.



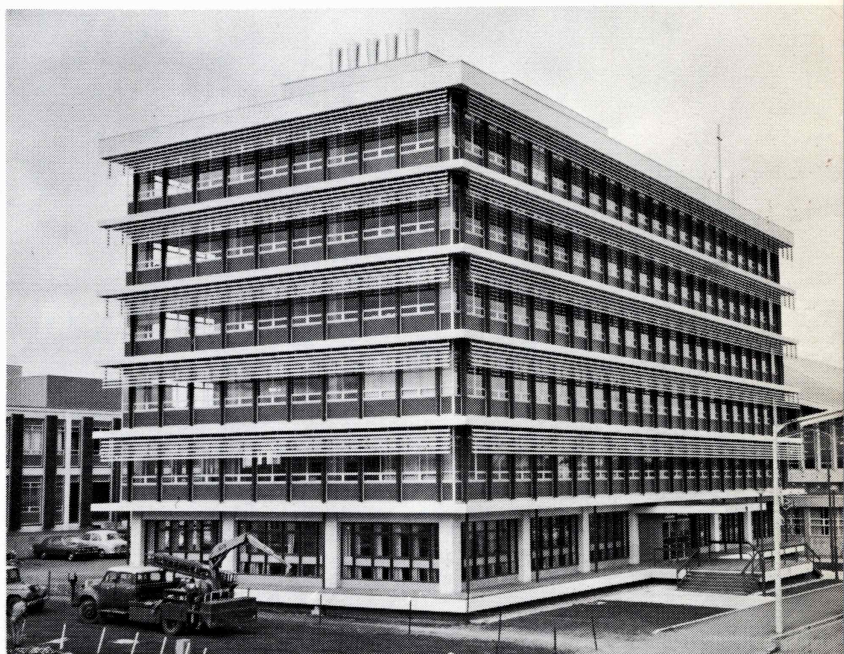
Post Office Headquarters, Wellington. The podium floors are devoted to mail-sorting operations while the tower floors will house the Head Office of the New Zealand Post Office.

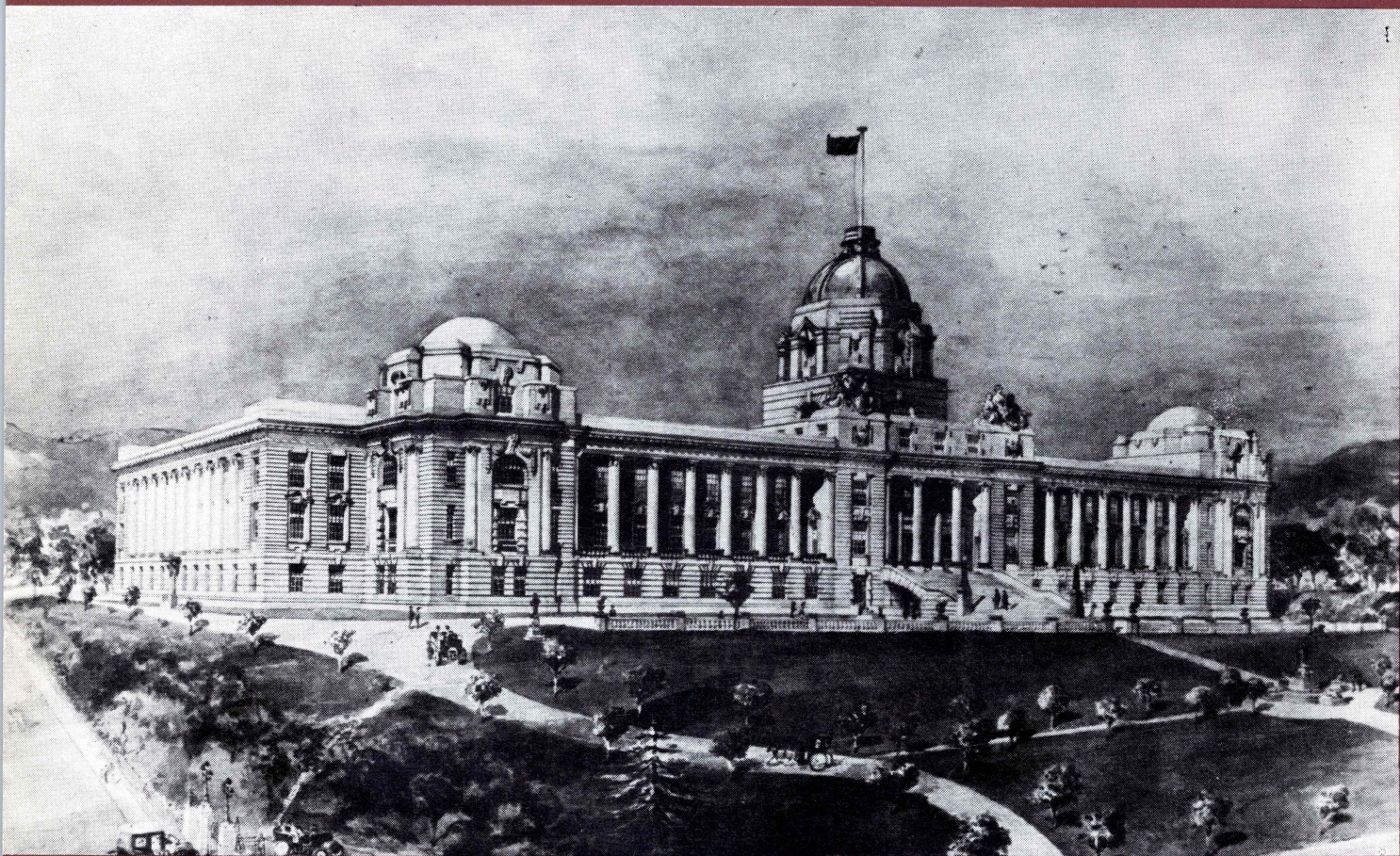


"Beehive" Additions to Parliament Buildings. In the background are the Bowen State Building and Broadcasting House.

There is no doubt that the spirit of service that has been a feature of the division since its inception carrying forward the tradition of the early Colonial Architects will continue to serve the Government of the day and all the people of New Zealand.

Atkinson Building, New Plymouth.





Issued: September 1970.
Ministry of Works, P.O. Box 12041, Wellington North.



**Ministry of Works
New Zealand**